

**Tuesday, December 02, 2008**

**[From the Coeur d'Alene Press](#)**

- No new education news stories posted online today.

**[From the Spokesman-Review](#)**

- Land Board educating public
- School board meeting to focus on 'Brave New World'

**[From the Moscow Pullman Daily News \(password required\)](#)**

- OUR VIEW: Ed reform not a short-term fix for budget problems (Editorial)

**[From the Lewiston Tribune \(password required\)](#)**

- Cuts put strain on higher ed

**[From the Idaho-Press Tribune, Nampa](#)**

- Universities seek greater tuition flexibility

**[From the Idaho Statesman](#)**

- Idaho college students could face big fee increases next fall
- Starting charter schools is easier than housing them
- Idaho colleges seek authority to boost tuition more than usual to offset budget cuts

**[From the Twin Falls Times-News](#)**

- Parents as teachers?
- Educators eyeing long-term future of cuts
- Universities seek greater tuition flexibility

**[From the Idaho State Journal \(password Required\)](#)**

- Shrinking fund worries school officials
- Otter orders new holdback

**[From the Idaho Falls Post Register \(password required\)](#)**

- EITC still on lookout

FROM THE COEUR D'ALENE PRESS

**No new education news stories posted online today.**

FROM THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

**Land Board educating public**

Betsy Z. Russell  
The Spokesman-Review  
November 29, 2008

BOISE – Forty-one percent of Idahoans have never heard of the state Land Board, according to a new state-funded poll, and 92 percent don't know who's on it.

The panel, formally known as the Idaho State Board of Land Commissioners, is chaired by the governor, and also includes the Secretary of State, the Attorney General, the state controller, and the state superintendent of schools. It's responsible for managing the state's endowment lands, whose earnings benefit public schools and other specific state institutions.

Gov. Butch Otter said even some state legislators have in recent years been unaware of the state's endowment lands and their unique status, so the Land Board a year ago launched a public education push. As part of that, contractor Mike Tracy, a former state Republican Party executive director, and his communications firm commissioned a statewide "baseline" poll. That'll allow results of the education campaign to be measured against a starting point.

The poll, conducted in September by Moore Information at a cost to the state of \$18,725, showed that Idahoans consider the top benefit of state lands to be fish and wildlife habitat, followed by recreation for humans. The lands as a source of revenue for public schools and other state institutions came in third in the rankings – though that's what the state Constitution says the endowment lands are for.

The poll found that after respondents learned that state endowment lands generate \$60 million a year for schools, 75 percent supported the contention that, "Management activities on these lands are not intended to benefit the general public, but rather, to maximize the financial return for Idaho's public schools and other institutions."

George Bacon, director of the Idaho State Department of Lands, said the department has increasingly struggled in recent years to get neighbors, local officials and others to understand its aims for endowment lands.

"We think it's money well spent if we can raise public awareness," Bacon said.

Tracy's contract is for up to \$85,000 a year; it was renewed in September for a second year. That figure doesn't include the polling cost. In addition to commissioning the poll, Tracy's firm has

redesigned the department's annual report, developed a DVD for use in presentations about the department and its role, and is developing a communications outreach plan for the department.

Bacon noted that the department has no public information officer, and said, "Contracting seems to be better."

When Idaho became a state in 1890, the Admissions Act granted the new state about 3 million acres of federal lands to support public schools, initially designated as sections 16 and 36 of every township. Another 650,000 acres was granted to support eight other institutions: An agricultural college; charitable institutions; a normal school for teacher education; the state penitentiary; a school of science; a mental hospital; the University of Idaho; and the state capitol.

It's the land in the endowments that the state Land Board manages. An endowment fund, made up of proceeds from sale of former endowment lands, also helps fund public schools and the eight institutions with its earnings.

The poll asked Idahoans how they'd feel about fees being charged to use state forest lands for recreation activities, such as hunting, fishing, camping and hiking. There was strong support for such fees – 64 percent for and 32 percent against – if the fees went to "improve and maintain recreation opportunities on state forest lands," but less support if the fees went to schools, 50 percent for and 46 percent against.

Asked about logging on state lands – which provides much of the income from state endowment lands – respondents to the poll were divided. Ten percent said current timber harvest levels on state lands are too high, 34 percent said they're about right, 22 percent said they're too low and 34 percent had no opinion.

Bacon said the polling will be repeated in a future year to see if the public education program is working, and whether it's worth continuing.

### **School board meeting to focus on 'Brave New World'**

Rainey Coffin  
Staff writer  
November 29, 2008

The Coeur d'Alene School Board scheduled a meeting for Dec. 15 at the Midtown Center, 1505 N. Fifth St., at 5 p.m. The meeting's purpose is to get comments from the community for a decision on the novel "Brave New World," written by Aldous Huxley in 1931.

The classic science fiction work by Huxley entertains a Utopian society, discussing unconventional means to reach the end result. The book came before the board for action,

recommended to be added to the district's novel recommendations list at the November meeting. The novel was not added to the list when the vote ended in a tie; one trustee was absent.

The Dec. 15 meeting topics will only be whether to add "Brave New World" to the recommendations list, along with the action of 26 other novels that have been available for public review in the last 30 days.

The regular meeting on Monday will not include the Dec. 15 items.

For more information visit the Coeur d'Alene School District Web site at [www.cdaschools.org](http://www.cdaschools.org).

#### FROM THE MOSCOW PULLMAN DAILY NEWS (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

#### **OUR VIEW: Ed reform not a short-term fix for budget problems (Editorial)**

National report might be worth looking at, but it's not this year's answer to money woes  
Posted on: Monday, December 01, 2008

Everything gets piled onto the table when times get tough.

Idaho's public schools, which regularly have to battle through the legislative process, undoubtedly will have to duke it out with other state agencies when the Legislature convenes in January.

Money is tight, and the state of the economy will create challenges for the most hawkish of legislative penny pinchers.

Those tough times also have caused the dust to get brushed off a 2006 report by a national group that calls for major shifts in the way education is provided.

The proposals were initially outlined two years ago in a report titled, "Tough Choices or Tough Times." It was the work of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce and included some dramatic ideas - from allowing high school students to jump to a junior college after their sophomore year if they passed an exam to allowing schools to be operated by independent contractors.

You don't have to go far to find people who want to see improvements in public schools, whether it's a different funding formula or enhanced graduation standards or greater accountability. So it's no surprise that some Idaho officials are giving the "Tough Choices or Tough Times" report another look and Ronn Robinson, the director of state relations for the group that produced the report, has already been to Idaho to pitch the report.

Tough times always include tough choices, and some of those tough choices can turn into good long-term decisions. But state officials shouldn't be looking to make long-term changes to the educational system in order to find some short-term solutions during the next budget cycle.

Even Robinson recognizes educational reform isn't a short-term solution.

"There is no way a state could even remotely begin to consider implementing an agenda like this any time soon," he told the Times-News of Twin Falls.

Idaho's lawmakers better be listening. We've seen the Legislature in action and doubt anything good could come from trying to jam through major education reform under the guise of "tough choices."

- Steve McClure, for the editorial board

#### FROM THE LEWISTON TRIBUNE (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

### **Cuts put strain on higher ed**

By Joel Mills of the Tribune

Tuesday, December 2, 2008

The 4 percent state budget holdback announced Monday will be painful enough, but Lewis-Clark State College's top financial officer said the true challenge will come if the cuts become permanent next year.

"That's a horse of a different color," said Chet Herbst, LCSC's financial vice president. "Then you might have to look at what programs might be trimmed back."

Herbst said a permanent reduction to the base LCSC budget could involve layoffs. But he said the college should be able to handle the reduction from this fiscal year's budget, about \$600,000, by leaving positions vacant, delaying other hires, reducing travel and other expenses, and putting off some purchases.

Gov. C.L. (Butch) Otter unveiled the cuts Monday morning, which added 3 percent reductions to state agency budgets that were reduced by 1 percent in September.

Otter also asked state agencies to hold back an additional 2 percent in reserve in case state budget numbers worsen over time.

The net result therefore feels like a 6 percent cut, said University of Idaho Vice President for Finance and Administration Lloyd Mues.

But Mues added it is a relief to finally have a target for which to aim after weeks of speculation.

"I'm glad that we got some definition," he said. "But it will really cause us to tighten our belts. It will be a significant challenge for us."

Based on the UI's base budget of about \$97 million, a 6 percent reduction would equal about \$5.8 million.

If the state's economic health does improve, however, the schools might at least be able to use the 2 percent reserve, Mues pointed out.

Herbst said LCSC will be able to survive the current fiscal year holdback.

The state wants rough budget numbers by Monday, and Herbst said the details will be worked out after that. The Idaho Statesman reported the state's four-year college and universities will ask the State Board of Education on Thursday for permission to seek tuition increases above 10 percent for the 2009-10 school year.

Herbst said LCSC has been preparing for possible budget reductions for several months, and Monday's announcement came as no surprise.

He said he thought in early summer an economic downturn was coming, and asked every unit at the college to prepare for two scenarios. The first - for a flat budget going into fiscal year 2010 - turned out to be the rosier of the two.

The second - for a 2 percent reduction - was revised to 5 percent later in the year.

"So we've been thinking about this pretty hard for some time," Herbst said. "At least we're not caught unprepared."

A proportional amount would come out of other college accounts not in the general fund, Herbst said, like research accounts and professional/technical funding. And some projects that were to be paid for by the state Permanent Building Fund will also see the ax, including a new elevator in Meriwether Lewis Hall and an update to the campus tennis center.

Mues said no options for funding reductions were off the table, including layoffs. But the UI has already instituted hiring and travel restrictions and taken other cost-cutting measures, so shedding personnel would be a last resort, he added.

Mills may be contacted at [jmills@lmtribune.com](mailto:jmills@lmtribune.com) or (208) 883-0564.

## FROM THE IDAHO-PRESS TRIBUNE, NAMPA

### **Universities seek greater tuition flexibility**

BOISE, Idaho (AP) -- Presidents of Idaho's public universities are laying the groundwork to request tuition or fee increases higher than the 10 percent allowed each year by the State Board of Education.

The administrators say the rule change will allow them to generate more revenue, if necessary, to help offset ongoing state budget cuts imposed by Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter. On Monday, Otter ordered state agencies to cut another 3 percent in spending due to lagging state tax revenue. It follows a 1 percent holdback imposed in September.

Board policy bars universities from requesting tuition increases for full-time students of more than 10 percent.

The request is being sought by the state's three public universities, as well as Lewis-Clark State College and Eastern Idaho Technical College.

The Board is meeting in Nampa later this week.

## FROM THE IDAHO STATESMAN

### **Idaho college students could face big fee increases next fall**

Idaho's four-year colleges and universities will ask the State Board of Education to permit them to seek fee and tuition increases above 10 percent for fall 2009.

What's next

The State Board of Education is expected to take up the universities' fee request at its meeting Thursday at the College of Western Idaho, 5500 E. University Way, Room 116/119, in Nampa. The meeting begins at 8 a.m. No public hearing is planned on the fee request, but the board holds an open forum at the beginning of each meeting for which people can sign up to talk.

BY BILL ROBERTS - broberts@idahostatesman.com

Edition Date: 12/02/08

Idaho's sagging tax revenues could hit students at the state's public four-year colleges and universities right in their pocketbooks next fall.

The schools will ask the State Board of Education on Thursday for permission to seek tuition increases above 10 percent for 2009-10 to help offset an \$11 million reduction in state support for higher ed in this budget year - and a possibly larger cut next year.

The request doesn't mean the schools will ask for that much of boost - about \$500 a year. And no matter what schools ask for, the board makes the final decision on tuition, typically at its April meeting.

But the request signals that university officials are feeling the financial pinch of the worst economic times in nearly three generations.

"It's very premature for us to make any prediction about the size of the tuition increase in April," said Bob Kustra, Boise State University president.

The schools do not yet know the full extent of the revenue cuts they will face this year and next, he said. But board policy requires pre-authorization in order to propose a tuition increase above 10 percent, so the move is a way to make sure schools have flexibility, Kustra said.

The schools include Boise State, the University of Idaho in Moscow, Idaho State University in Pocatello and Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston.

Idaho four-year college and university tuition doubled in the past decade, rising from an average \$2,343 to \$4,642 today. But even that is well below averages in other Western states, and Idaho ranks near the bottom in the amount that students pay to attend college.

At Boise State, tuition makes up \$50 million of the \$137 million general fund portion of the school's budget. That's almost a third. State funds make up the remainder.

Without expanding revenue sources, colleges may have to eliminate some classes, postpone hiring faculty and delay new education programs, university officials say. Schools are already keeping some jobs unfilled and looking at other ways to economize.

If the colleges try make up for lost revenue with a substantial jump in tuition - which has risen about 5 to 7 percent a year in recent years - they could face resistance from board members and students.

"This is something that is happening nationwide," said Milford Terrell, State Board president. "Why would you push this off on the kids when the the kids are already struggling to get through school? Do they have any more money? I don't think so."

The board does not set tuition for the state's three community colleges, including the new College of Western Idaho. Those are established by locally elected trustees.

University of Idaho and Boise State University student leaders, who play a large role in helping universities arrive at their tuition and fee requests to the board, are cautious about balancing a tight budget on the backs of students.

"I think a double-digit increase is excessive," said Trevor Grigg, Boise State student body president. "I don't think government should be exempt (from) a recession. They should have to get through these tough times like everybody else."

Garrett Holbrook, U of I student body president, said students are nervous about even a 5 percent increase given the economic times they live in.

U of I administrators could not be reached for comment Monday.

Idaho has been in this situation before. Falling revenues in the 2001 recession forced colleges and universities to come to the State Board in 2002 with requests for double-digit tuition increases. The board approved increases averaging 12 percent.

But Kustra doesn't think Boise State is at that point. "I can't see myself doing that," he said.

Bill Roberts: 377-6408

### **Starting charter schools is easier than housing them**

Taxpayers pay for operations, but Idaho charter schools must acquire their own facilities.

Shawn Raecke/ Idaho Statesman

Rainy Pearlman, a bench area resident, shows Suzanne Burton, the administrator at Anser Public Charter School, some points of interest about homes located across the field behind Franklin Elementary. Anser would like to buy the school and partner with the city on making the field a public park which could be used by Anser and the city. SHAWN RAECKE Idaho Statesman file

[www.chartercommission.id.gov](http://www.chartercommission.id.gov)

[www.sde.idaho.gov](http://www.sde.idaho.gov)

BY JESSIE L. BONNER - THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Edition Date: 12/02/08

The 20-foot cross was removed from the church steeple two years ago, not long after the Compass Public Charter School moved into the building at 2511 W. Cherry Lane in Meridian.

The religious imagery inside the church is discreetly hidden while 420 students go to class. The large room with the vaulted ceiling and stained-glass windows becomes a band room. A white curtain hides a small cross above the pulpit.

The Ten Mile Christian congregation covers the communion table after Sunday worship.

"They call it the sanctuary. We call it the auditorium," said Kelly Trudeau, a Compass Charter School administrator.

Charter schools in Idaho face a common problem: finding - and paying for - a place to call their own.

In a state that has embraced alternatives to the traditional classroom, 31 public charter schools hold about 11,000 students. These schools also operate from facilities that include a former plant nursery and pet store in Coeur d'Alene, a former athletic center in Boise, a strip mall in Garden City and the church in Meridian.

Like traditional public schools, Idaho charters operate with state money based on average daily student attendance.

Unlike traditional public schools, charters cannot get money from property taxpayers to buy buildings through bonds or levies. Instead, the teachers, parents and community members who have founded charter schools since the state law allowing them was passed in 1998 seek out investors or borrow from banks to buy facilities.

#### TEMPORARY HOMES IN TRAILERS

"That is the largest financial challenge charter schools face," said Shirley Rau, school choice coordinator for the state Department of Education. "They are borrowing at the same rate as other nonprofit facilities."

A third of Idaho charter schools started out in portable trailer classrooms, typically in rural areas of the state where facilities are harder to find, Rau said.

Many of these charters, like Hidden Springs Charter School north of Boise, have since purchased or built facilities, but some still operate from mobile classrooms.

"What you'll see is a big farm field with trailers," Rau said, adding that a charter school set to open next year in northern Idaho is "probably going to end up in a furniture store."

All but two of the 15 charter schools that own facilities did so with backing from investors, loans, and heavy community fundraising - and by saving chunks of state money they get based on student attendance.

"Most of this has happened in the last three years," Rau said. "They've only just been able to manage."

#### IDAHO ARTS CHARTER: A NEW HOME AT LAST

The Idaho Arts Charter School moved a new building this year at 1220 5th St. N. in Nampa after years of renting an old church and using nine trailers to hold nearly 600 students, grades K-12.

The school is paying back a 30-year, \$7.5 million loan from Wachovia Corp. that it used to buy the building, said Jackie Collins, school director. No local banks were willing to take the risk, she said.

The Coeur d'Alene Charter Academy leased a former plant nursery and pet store for three years before buying the warehouse-style building, where 557 students in grades six-12 wear uniforms

and adhere to strict discipline codes as part of a rigorous college-prep program, said school business manager Glenn Mabile.

The school spent \$1.5 million to expand and renovate.

"We don't think you have build a big glorious building to give students a quality education," Mabile said. "The programs and the people come first. A building is secondary."

#### COMPASS CHARTER: A \$6 MILLION DEBT

Compass found an investor to buy the Meridian church it formerly rented from Ten Mile Christian, and now it has to pay back a \$6 million loan. The church now pays the school rent and plans to move next year.

"We have another church ready to move in. It will pay for our utilities," said Bridget Barrus, chairwoman of the board that governs Compass and one of the parents who founded it.

The 16 Idaho charter schools that do not own facilities rent, lease or share while saving to buy a building.

#### CLASSES IN RACQUETBALL COURTS AT ANSER

Anser Charter School has held classes at the Bronco Elite Arts and Athletics building at 1187 W. River St., since 1999. Athletes as young as age 5 take Bronco Elite classes there, sometimes while Anser is in session. Racquetball courts were converted into classrooms. The musty-smelling gym takes up the center of the building.

The school spent about \$450,000 remodeling the building, which holds about 200 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Anser could enroll more or get more state funding to save toward a new building, but larger classes could also work against the mission of the school, said Principal Suzanne Gregg.

Charters are typically created with a specific purpose. In Idaho, charters range from an online school aimed at minority students to programs that emphasize music, art, dance and drama.

Anser has small classes designed to give students more attention. They are required to participate in community-based projects. Anser is Latin for goose. The school's Web site says geese rotate positions while flying to increase endurance and honk encouragement, and the name represents Anser's collaborative community.

The school is saving to buy the century-old Franklin Elementary School building from the Boise School District and move out of Downtown.

"Unfortunately, we're investing money in a building we're only leasing," Gregg said.

The racquetball courts were split into skinny classrooms with tall ceilings. Sound panels resembling egg cartons prevent noise from leaking from room to room. The kindergarten teacher snagged the only classroom with a sink.

In a school with no cafeteria, students picked up pizza in the office on a recent Friday and brought it back to their classrooms. Children are bused to the local YMCA for physical education class. Chalk dust used by athletes during gymnastics classes often covers the lockers and cubby holes in the gymnasium.

The Idaho Statesman contributed to this story.

### **Idaho colleges seek authority to boost tuition more than usual to offset budget cuts**

By Bill Roberts - [broberts@idahostatesman.com](mailto:broberts@idahostatesman.com)  
Edition Date: 12/01/08

Idaho's sagging tax revenues could hit students at the state's public four-year colleges and universities right in their pocketbooks next fall.

The schools will ask the State Board of Education on Thursday for permission to seek tuition increases above 10 percent for 2009-2010 2009 to help offset an \$11 million reduction in state support for higher ed in this budget year — and a possibly larger cut next year.

The request doesn't mean the schools will ask for that much of boost — about \$500 a year. And no matter what schools ask for, the board makes the final decision on tuition, typically at its April meeting. But the request signals that university officials are feeling the financial pinch of the worst economic times in nearly three generations.

"It's very premature for us to make any prediction about the size of the tuition increase in April," said Bob Kustra, Boise State University president.

The schools do not yet know the full extent of the revenue cuts they will face this year and next, he said. But board policy requires pre-authorization to propose a tuition increase above 10 percent, so the move is a way to make sure schools have flexibility, Kustra said.

The schools include Boise State, the University of Idaho, Idaho State University in Pocatello and Lewis-Clark State College in Lewiston.

For more details, pick up Tuesday's Idaho Statesman.

## FROM THE TWIN FALLS TIMES-NEWS

### **Parents as teachers?**

State rep proposes financial benefits for parents that teach kindergarten at home

By Ben Botkin

Times-News writer

Kindergarten teacher Suzanne Olson taught her class at Oregon Trail Elementary School about numbers on Monday afternoon.

She gave some advice for how to remember the number eight: "It looks a lot like a snowman," she said, while also helping the youngsters add seven and one.

It's a familiar scene that unfolds in kindergarten classrooms across Idaho - and one that could come with another option for parents under a legislative proposal. Rep. Steven Thayn, R-Emmett, wants to give parents another choice for their youngster's kindergarten year that would come with financial benefits.

Under Thayn's proposal, which he plans to introduce in the 2009 Legislature, parents could teach their children kindergarten at home. In exchange, they would get part of the state funding that's saved by not having the youngster attending a public kindergarten class. Parents would only be eligible for funding after their children passed a test showing a readiness for first grade.

"The reason for the proposal is generally the students that do best in school have good parent support," Thayn said. "What I'm trying to establish is a pattern of parental involvement at an early age."

Under his proposal, half of the money saved would go to parents, one quarter would go to school districts and another quarter would go to the education stabilization fund. Thayn sees the proposal as one that would benefit taxpayers while helping students at the same time.

"It does everything," he said. "It gets the parents involved. It gets kids ready for first grade and it saves a little bit of money."

The statewide average cost for kindergarten is \$4,500 per student, which would give parents about \$2,250 on average, Thayn said. He stressed that parents would only receive a payment if their child was ready for first grade, which would prevent abuse of the system.

"There's accountability on the part of parents," he said. "We're only paying for results."

The program would also be entirely optional, with traditional kindergarten classes still available for parents and students, Thayn said.

Kindergarten classes, while funded by the state, are not mandatory for children in Idaho.

Thayn also said it's possible that parents could use kindergarten teachers as a training resource, adding that discussion about the proposal is still in its early stages.

"We're wanting the kids to be ready, and the kindergarten teachers are the professionals," Thayn said.

Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna hasn't talked with Thayn about the idea yet.

"Superintendent Luna is always open to new and innovative ideas, but he has not yet had a chance to sit down and discuss this particular idea with Rep. Thayn," spokeswoman Melissa McGrath said in an email.

Bryan Fischer, executive director of the Idaho Values Alliance, said his organization supports the proposal. The alliance has 1,400 people statewide as part of its network.

"We like this proposal because it opens up additional choices for parents," Fischer said. "We see this as a benefit to families because it will strengthen the bond between parents and children in the preschool years. It will provide an additional incentive for parents to provide early childhood education for their children at home. Every child that is educated at home rather than a brick and mortar classroom is going to save the state money."

State Rep. Donna Pence, D-Gooding, a member of the House Education Committee, said the proposal would need a lot of discussion before its details could be worked out.

One potential drawback would be figuring out how to know if a parent actually taught their children kindergarten or simply sent them to a daycare instead and collected the state funding, she said.

"It would be like being paid for sending them to kindergarten," she said.

Olson said teaching kindergarten can be more challenging than what it appears on the appearance. In the early stages of kindergarten, children do not yet associate letters and numbers with what concepts they represent.

With federal No Child Left Behind requirements, it's critical for students to be grounded in the basics when first grade starts, she said.

If parents opted for teaching their children kindergarten, they should understand all that it entails before making the decision.

In the traditional kindergarten setting, parents are welcome for classes and special events, along with helping out on homework.

Olson also expressed concern for what would happen with students who weren't ready for first grade.

"What are they going to do with those kids that are eight and haven't passed?" she said.

Ben Botkin may be reached at 208-735-3238 or bbotkin@magicvalley.com.

### **Educators eyeing long-term future of cuts**

By Ben Botkin

Times-News writer

The new \$21 million health and human services building at the College of Southern Idaho might open later than planned if the current economic crisis translates into long-term funding problems, said the co-chairman of the state's budgeting panel.

The building is currently under construction but won't see an immediate impact from the 4 percent budget holdbacks that Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter has ordered this year for the state. The budget for the next fiscal year, 2009-2010, will determine if there is money to open the new building as scheduled in January 2010.

If the economic woes continue, the Legislature may be unable to fund the initial operating costs for the building, said Joint Finance-Appropriations Committee Co-chairman Sen. Dean Cameron, R-Rupert.

"They won't have the resources to even open the building if we can't find the resources to pay the janitors and all the costs ... that are called operating costs," he said.

Jerry Beck, president of CSI, said the college needs to look at its budget - for the short-term and the long-term. Legislative approval for funding will be needed in the next session for it to open on schedule.

"The target date for that building is January 2010, which is halfway through this next fiscal year," Beck said. "The question becomes would the Legislature entertain giving us half of the occupancy costs?"

Beck said that getting the building open on schedule is the first priority on his legislative agenda, but acknowledged that the building's opening date could be impacted by the state's fiscal health. The college's overall budget challenge is dealing with funding cutbacks in a time of growing enrollment, Beck said.

"The \$64,000 question is going to be: 'What's going to be the revenue projections after all this settles down?' he said. "We're in uncharted waters."

For now, CSI officials are looking at trimming about \$760,000 from the budget for the holdbacks ordered for this fiscal year, said Mike Mason, vice president of administration.

Mason said college officials will be working during the next couple days on a plan for dealing with the holdbacks.

"We'll continue to try and not impact students," Mason said.

The college already evaluates open positions and decides if they're needed before filling them, Mason said.

For school districts, the holdbacks do not create an immediately bleak budget situation. Public schools are able to tap into the state's public education stabilization fund, which was created in the 2006 special legislative session as a rainy day fund for budget shortfalls. Without the fund, public schools would be trimming \$60.7 million from their budgets for the holdbacks.

But the stabilization fund only has \$114 million, and the holdbacks will eat away at more than half of that. Wiley Dobbs, superintendent of Twin Falls School District, said he's thankful that the stabilization fund is in place, but uncertain what to anticipate for the next budget year.

Because of the need for new staff at Canyon Ridge High School next year, that creates an additional issue if budget shortfalls arise for the district, Dobbs said.

Melissa McGrath, spokeswoman for the State Department of Education, said Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Luna is advising districts to be prudent with their budgets.

"Superintendent Luna strongly encourages all public schools and districts to look closely at how they are currently spending every dollar and find ways to reduce costs because the economic outlook could get worse before it gets better," McGrath said.

Mark Browning, spokesman for the State Board of Education, said the board will keep three positions open and cut back on travel to meet the holdback needs. For the board of education, the 3 percent holdback is \$153,800, with the total 4 percent holdback amount of \$205,000.

Jared Hopkins contributed to this report.

Ben Botkin may be reached at 208-735-3238 or [bbotkin@magicvalley.com](mailto:bbotkin@magicvalley.com).

### **Universities seek greater tuition flexibility**

BOISE, Idaho - Presidents of Idaho's public universities are laying the groundwork to request tuition or fee increases higher than the 10 percent allowed each year by the State Board of Education.

The administrators say the rule change will allow them to generate more revenue, if necessary, to help offset ongoing state budget cuts imposed by Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter. On Monday, Otter ordered state agencies to cut another 3 percent in spending due to lagging state tax revenue. It follows a 1 percent holdback imposed in September.

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The Board is meeting in Nampa later this week.

A service of the Associated Press(AP)

#### FROM THE IDAHO STATE JOURNAL (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

### **Shrinking fund worries school officials**

Schools lack way to replenish fund  
BY CASEY SANTEE  
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POCATELLO — School District 25 officials discussed their concerns with area lawmakers about mounting state budget holdbacks and other issues Monday during a special board meeting.

Idaho Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter announced a 3 percent holdback Monday morning. For the state’s public schools, that amounts to nearly \$47 million. Coupled with a 1 percent holdback in September, the total for fiscal year 2009 is nearly \$61 million.

That money will be removed from Idaho’s School Stabilization Fund, which began the year with about \$114 million.

Bart Reed, District 25 business manager, said the district is concerned by the fund’s shrinking balance because there is currently no source to replenish it.

“It’s like saying, ‘We’re not going to take it out of your checking account, we’ll take it from your savings,’” Reed said. “It still has an impact.”

Otter directed state agencies to hold an additional 2 percent in reserve for the balance of the year due to the possibility of another holdback.

School District 25 officials also told legislators that while more than 50 percent of the district’s teachers are slated to retire in the next decade, it’s getting harder to recruit quality educators to replace them.

Douglas Howell, director of human resources, said that the key problem with teacher recruiting and retention efforts is that the surrounding states offer higher salaries than Idaho, where the beginning base pay is \$31,750.

Superintendent Mary Vagner asked the lawmakers to voice support to their constituents regarding the district’s upcoming \$7.5 million supplemental levy election scheduled for Feb. 10.

Vagner said the money is badly needed following years of rapid inflation and nearly flat state funding.

## Otter orders new holdback

BY YANN RANAIVO

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POCATELLO — Idaho State University will cut approximately \$4.4 million in spending this year following Gov. C.L. “Butch” Otter’s announcement Monday mandating most state agencies to initiate an additional 3 percent holdback.

ISU president Arthur Vailas announced the spending cuts to faculty and staff during a monthly open forum hosted in the university’s Bengal Theater. Otter’s holdback adds to an initial 1 percent holdback announced in September, and Otter is asking state agencies to reserve another 2 percent from their spending budgets.

ISU, which is cutting nearly \$3 million, will withhold another \$1.4 million for what is virtually a 6 percent holdback.

Otter began warning agencies of spending cuts earlier this fall after state economists projected a 5.9 percent budget shortfall for fiscal year 2009. The governor initially mandated agencies to budget for no more than 2.5 percent holdbacks, but nearly doubled the cuts following an increased decline in the housing market and rising unemployment throughout the state.

ISU took further precautions last month when it told faculty and staff about an “increased scrutiny” plan that included \$3.8 million and \$5.5 million in spending cuts. The university dispelled fears about faculty layoffs and hiring freezes, asking instead for more thorough reviews of its departments’ spending plans before drawing funds from its budget.

Some details of ISU’s plan include additional scrutiny of vacated positions, which average about 70 in any given month.

Although ISU is making cuts out of a \$77.3 million general funds budget, the university is covering most of its holdbacks with a nearly \$3 million one-time capital investment fund from the state Legislature. ISU officials said a portion of the one-time fund is appropriated annually to purchase equipment such as new computers.

James Fletcher, ISU’s vice president of finance and administration, told faculty and staff Monday that the most recent holdbacks were “beyond” what the university had planned for earlier this year.

“As of this morning, we believed that we had pretty much gotten out in front,” Fletcher said.

Fletcher, however, reasserted ISU’s aim to not eliminate full-time teaching faculty and compared the university’s more modest economic outlook with other institutions such as Harvard, which he said imposed both holdbacks and hiring freezes this year.

“Increased scrutiny will be significantly strengthened. We’re also going to work with deans and department heads to increase scrutiny on travel plans,” Fletcher said. “What we’re not going to do is initiate layoffs and hand out pink slips. And (there will be) no hiring freezes, but it will be tighter.”

FROM THE IDAHO FALLS POST REGISTER (PASSWORD REQUIRED)

**EITC still on lookout**

By SAMANTHA PAK [spak@postregister.com](mailto:spak@postregister.com)

The Idaho Falls technical college is still searching for a president and has had an interim leader since June 30.

The search for Eastern Idaho Technical College's new president continues.

At the moment, Burton Waite, a former program manager at the Division of Professional Technical Education, is acting as interim president. Waite has held the position since former EITC President Bill Robertson retired June 30.

It has been five months and EITC has yet to find a permanent replacement, but Idaho State Board of Education spokesperson Mark Browning said president searches generally take six to nine months.

"But it's not uncommon for them to take upwards of a year," he said.

Although the board's goal is to find somebody as soon as possible, it is more focused on finding the right person for the job, Browning said.

A nationwide search was conducted, but Browning would not say where candidates are from or whether the board has narrowed its list.

Browning did say the board is pleased with the candidates and that EITC's next president will be highly qualified and a good fit for the college.

There is also the possibility that Waite might become the permanent president, which is nothing new for EITC. Robertson was in the same position as Waite before he became the college's president.

"The board has been very pleased with the work that (Waite) has done since July," Browning said.